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Good Afternoon Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the General Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

My name is Eddie Chase and I am a playwright and theatre artist who very proudly calls Connecticut his home. I am also very proud to say that for the past year I have worked for the International Festival of Arts and Ideas, a world class performing arts organization and a community and economic revitalizer for New Haven and the State of Connecticut.

Some of you may be unaware of this- but I am a rare breed: a twenty-something young professional, who is working in the industry in which they got their degree (the arts of all places!), and who is also proud to say that they are from Connecticut with no intention of leaving any time soon. That last part is the most crucial: in Connecticut, 20-24 year olds only make up 7% of the states population, and if you ask any one of them, most of them are likely to tell you that "they can't wait to get out of Connecticut." I know this because I used to be one of those people. Thanks to the Festival, that's not the case anymore. To be perfectly transparent, my relationship with Arts and Ideas goes well beyond my year of employment with them. If you've picked up the New Haven Register or checked out the website Broadway World recently, you may have read about the Fellowship Program, a 6 month professional development intensive for underserved high school students, which teaches its participants skills in critical thinking, creative expression, and non-profit management. Seven years ago, in my senior year of high school, I was one of the inaugural Festival Fellows. At the time I was a bullied kid with ADHD living in section 8 housing in Seymour who couldn't wait to get out of Connecticut. I was also a kid who was told repeatedly that a career in the Arts would not be fiscally viable, and if I pursue one, I'll remain poor for the rest of my life. By showing me the vibrant possibilities of working in the Arts and the Non-profit sector as a whole, the Festival taught me otherwise. The Fellowship program gave me the courage to defy that kind of thinking and pursue a degree in Directing, Programming, and Production from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. After I graduated, I wanted to stay in the thriving arts community that exists in Philly, but financial circumstances forced me to return to Connecticut. And who was there to provide me with a job, a steady income, and clear vision of the future? The International Festival of Arts and Ideas.

With the incredible deficit that is mounting, this state needs now more than ever to draw young professionals like myself to come and live and work in the state. With more young creatives like myself, you get more tax payers, and thus more revenue for the state without having to increase taxes. The Festival is not just a couple of concerts on the New Haven Green. The Festival anchors a vast network of artists and arts workers to New Haven and to Connecticut at large. Last year it employed over 1000 artists and arts workers. 90% of the workers are from Connecticut and each one of those folks have their own networks in the big cities that Connecticut is trying to compete with, and each one of them can say, "Hey, come work at the Festival with me?" I know I plan to bring in my own personal network from Philadelphia. My hope is that as you attempt the arduous task of balancing our state budget, you will keep the Festival in mind, not as an extraneous expense, but as an investment into a key generator of workers and tax payers in Connecticut.

I ask that you please maintain your commitment to this astounding organization.

Thank you, and good afternoon.